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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (11/28): POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF
"GAZA ISLAND"

Main Stories:

Al Quds leads with the collapse of the electricity grid in Gaza. An electricity company representative explains that transformers serving densely populated areas collapsed under the "intense pressure" and lack of spare parts caused by Israel's refusal to allow needed parts into the Strip. All papers report that Israel resealed Gaza crossings on November 27, after a Palestinian projectile was fired into Israel, "causing no damage." Al Quds' inside page cites Israel's Ma'ariv daily in revealing that Hamas has longer range rockets in Gaza that can hit Beer Sheva in southern Israel. The paper adds that Hamas received the rockets from Hizbollah.

In Gaza humanitarian news, Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page reports that 45 trucks with food, animal feed and chlorine for water sterilization were allowed into Gaza on November 27. Al Quds' front page notes that a Gazan mother of five died on November 27, after Israeli authorities prevented her from exiting Gaza for treatment in West Bank hospitals. In economic news, Al Ayyam's inside page reports that the Gaza closures might affect the cash transfer of salaries to Gaza banks for payment to Palestinian Authority (PA) employees. According to the story, Israel has not yet responded to the PA request to send \$47 million for that purpose.

Al Ayyam leads with PLO satisfaction over the Arab foreign ministers meeting in Cairo. Citing "agencies", the paper quotes PLO Executive Committee member Yasir Abd Rabbo describing decisions as, "in line with PLO positions" and he urged Hamas to accept them. Al Quds front pages a Reuters story noting that the Arab foreign ministers declined to side with any of the conflicting Palestinian factions, and declined to directly blame Hamas for the collapse of Palestinian unity talks. The ministers also expressed support for Palestinian Authority President Abbas to remain in office until new elections, the paper reports. In a second front page story, Al Ayyam cites DPA

when quoting Egypt's Foreign Minister Abu Al Ghayt describing the Cairo meeting as "fruitful" and noting that there was agreement on approaching the next U.S. administration with a new Arab vision for peace, to be presented in a paper prepared by the Arab foreign ministers.

Al Hayat Al Jadida leads with, and all dailies front page, statements by Palestinian Authority President Abbas' and Italian President Napolitano, made during a joint press conference in Bethlehem on November 27. Napolitano encouraged Palestinian leadership to continue efforts towards ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and affirmed Italian support for negotiations. Abbas called on Israel to halt its, "harsh and violent actions against Palestinians, including the continued construction of settlements, the separation wall and installation of checkpoints." Abbas added that, "without a cessation of aggressive Israeli actions, peace can not be advanced in the region." Al Ayyam's front page also quotes Abbas calling on president-elect Obama to adopt the Arab peace initiative as the basis for negotiations.

All dailies report in front page pictures and stories about the opening of a trade fair in the West Bank city of Jenin by Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Fayyad, attended by Middle East Quartet representative Tony Blair on November 27. In remarks, Fayyad reissued warnings that Israel's West Bank settlement policy is threatening peace and stability in the Palestinian Territories. Fayyad urged the international community to implement its declared positions and stop settlement activities. Fayyad continued that his government is doing its utmost to enforce security and stability and working to end the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip. He concluded by urging Israel to end its "siege" on Gaza, remove checkpoints and

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all other restrictions on Palestinian movement, noting that they hamper the movement of goods and people, restricting the growth of the Palestinian private sector.

Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page cites AFP in reporting on a rally by "American Jews" in West Jerusalem on November 27, held to demand the relocation of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Al Ayyam's front page reports on a recent Israeli Government "regional master plan for Jerusalem," that allows for the expansion of illegal settlements while restricting Palestinian development. Lawyers representing dozens of Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem announced on November 27, intentions to challenge the plan in Israeli courts. In background reporting, the paper notes that a Jerusalem "master plan 2000" was introduced in 2004 and criticized for excluding Palestinian input.

Al Quds' inside page reports that foreign journalists continue their protest of Israel's ban on journalists to enter Gaza. Steven Gutkin, Foreign Press Association head called the decision a violation of press freedom during a November 27 press conference and a joint letter to Israeli Prime Minister Olmert from ABC, BBC, CNN, AP and the NYT has been sent demanding access to Gaza. The letter has gone unanswered, the paper reports.

Thursday, November 27

All front pages report that Israeli daily Ha'aretz revealed on November 26 that the Israeli military has been assassinating wanted West Bank Palestinians in violation of Israeli High Court guidelines. In other military and settler news, Al Ayyam's front page reports that Israel's Defense Minister Barak stated that the Israeli military will implement Israeli High Court orders to evacuate Israeli settlers from the disputed Palestinian, Rajabi family home in Hebron. Meanwhile, Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page and Al Ayyam's inside page report that Israeli settlers threw stones at Palestinians and slashed tires on 25 Palestinians cars in Hebron while settlers near Nablus attacked Palestinian ambulances, spray painting slogans of "death to Arabs."

Al Ayyam's front page cited AFP when reporting that the Bush Administration has no intention of publishing a report written by U.S. envoy for Middle East Security General James Jones. Analysis described the report as a "political bomb" noting that State Department Spokesman Robert Wood recently said that he has not aware of any plans to publish it. The article continues that though a similar report by Jones about Iraq was published, there has been no explanation offered for why the report on Palestinian security will not be made public.

Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida's front pages report that the UN and non-governmental agencies have made a combined appeal for \$462 million dollars to respond to the "humanitarian emergency caused by Israeli policies, such as West Bank settlements, the separation wall, and the blockade of Gaza."

U.S. Consulate General Jerusalem activities are highlighted on inside pages of Al Quds and Al Ayyam. The first report notes that cultural affairs staff visited Hebron University on November 26 to discuss cooperative projects, while the second report highlights the second annual career day/job fair for Palestinian university students, co-sponsored by the Consulate and local organization Young Entrepreneurs Palestine was held on November 25. Al Ayyam reports that the USAID-funded Ruwwad program worked with local Juhud organization to distribute beehives to Palestinian farmers in Tulkarim and Ramallah villages.

BLOCK QUOTES:

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1) Al Quds editorial is titled, "Confronting [Israeli] settlements is an international responsibility" (11/28): "The settlement phenomenon relentlessly creeps forward to threaten not only the two state solution, but also the very existence of the Palestinian people on their land... we need more effective Palestinian action to internationally highlight the dangers of settlements and their destructive impact on the Palestinian existence... there is no doubt that settlements and settlement expansion are the reason for the freeze of the peace process... ending this cancerous phenomenon is the only way to realize a just, comprehensive and lasting regional peace."

2) Hamada Rajab Abu Saraya opines in Al Ayyam under the title, "Gaza Island"(11/28): "Israel will continue remote monitoring of "security transgressions" in Gaza, but that tradition could change if more than food stuffs and humanitarian assistance were allowed to flow in both directions. [For that to happen] Gaza would have to cease being a security threat to Israel, separate from Israel and the West Bank, and pose no security threat to Egypt. As long as Gaza remained less than a state with no sovereignty over territorial waters, but with autonomous rule, the situation might even achieve regional goals, in addition to those of Israel."

Walles